

THE LURE OF MEDICAL HISTORY†

RATIONAL OR LIBERAL MEDICINE*‡

AS UNDERSTOOD SOME "FIFTY YEARS AGO"

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PART II**

MEN sometimes ask me of what school of medicine I am. I am always puzzled to answer.

Schools in science imply distinctive theories or dogmas. As there are no such distinctive theories or dogmas to this, it can have no specific or definitive name. It is simply the science of medicine, as one speaks of the science of chemistry, or of astronomy. I can only reply: "I am a physician; and my system is only known as the science of medicine; because of its freedom from hampering dogmas, and instead its search after causes, it might be termed "rational medicine"—sometimes called regular medicine. It is sometimes, by persons unacquainted with it, called allopathy, but mistakenly. It might as well be called hydropathy, or homeopathy, or eclecticism; and yet it is neither. And yet, in a certain sense, it is all of these; for all of them are only one-sided views of some phase of its broader and more rational development. As before stated, distinctive names imply dogmas, and dogmas are narrow and one-sided. They belong to the early, the youthful, the immature ages of science. Schools of medicine, or of any science, belong to a lower plane. On the higher plane of true science, schools drop away. Science is one. There was a time when one might ask of an astronomer, or of the chemist, to what school of astronomy or chemistry do you belong? Now we do not ask so. With increasing knowledge the schools have dropped aside. Now the reply would be simply: "I am an astronomer," or, "I am a chemist."

So in medicine. Rational medicine has passed beyond the narrowness of restrictive dogmas, and calls itself by no distinctive name. It is only the science of medicine; and its practitioners call themselves simply physicians.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PROFESSION OF MEDICINE

The profession of medicine is organized, as are the other professions, because through organization the ends of science may best be furthered. Organization does not imply sameness of thought

or views. Probably no two members of the profession think in all things alike. This is not the object or purpose of organization. An organization which meant dogmas and sameness would be death to progress. These are the things which it seeks to avoid. Its constant labor is to encourage variety and originality of thought. The objects of organization are:

To combine forces for more successful and thorough investigation of questions of medical science, and to diffuse information about new discoveries and advances. As illustrations may be cited new discoveries and advances. As other expressions may be cited the monthly meetings of the numerous county medical societies all over the land, the annual meetings of the state and national medical associations, and of similar bodies in all civilized lands, and the periodical gathering of the International Medical Association. Also may be cited the hundreds of medical and surgical journals published all over the civilized world.

A second object of organization is to carry on more successfully and thoroughly the work of medical education. As results of this may be pointed out the colleges of medicine which dot all lands, with their large aggregation of capital invested in buildings, libraries, scientific appliances, and the extensive laboratories for experimentation connected therewith. This heading may also include the duty of establishing and enforcing among the colleges a recognized standard of efficiency and thoroughness in educational work. The fruits of this are seen in the progressive advancement from the simple pupillage, for a short term, under some practicing physician, or the single course of lectures of the earlier ages, to the two years, and now the three years, of carefully graded lectures and hospital work, and the rigid examinations, before the student becomes eligible to the degree of Doctor of Medicine. And recognition is refused to colleges failing to adopt, and in good faith observe, such advanced requirements in their educational work.

Again may be mentioned, as among the objects of organization, the discouragement of narrow and obstructive systems or schools of medicine.

And, finally, may be mentioned, to establish and maintain a code of ethics for the profession. Recognizing, even in the earliest ages, the semi-sacred character of its calling, the profession has ever laid down, for the guidance of its members, rules of conduct, defining their duties to the sick, to community, and to each other.

The Hippocratic oath, which is probably the oldest code that has been saved to us, and which twenty-three centuries ago was administered to the physician upon commencing his practice, had in it the groundwork of a strong ethical morality; and from that day to this, through all the long ages, the moralities of the profession have never been lost sight of, and the oath of Hippocrates has broadened out into the pure and lofty code which is made binding upon every physician, and which in the fullness of its requirements does not yield precedence even to that imposed upon the minister or the priest when admitted to his sacred calling. It is true, many unworthy members of the pro-

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* An address delivered by J. P. Widney, A.M., M.D., dean of the College of Medicine of the University of Southern California, before the Unity Club of Los Angeles.

Doctor Widney was the founder of the Los Angeles County Medical Association and of the College of Medicine of the University of Southern California. An interesting biographical sketch of Doctor Widney was printed in the April and May issues, pages 292 and 396.

‡ Reprint from the *Southern California Practitioner* of April, 1888. See also editorial comments in the June issue of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE (page 461).

** Part I was printed on page 513 in the June issue of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE.

fession fall far short of its standard in their daily conduct; yet the code is there, ever standing as a written reproach to them, and in proportion as they fail to come up to its requirements they lose caste and standing among the more honorable members of the profession.

RELATION OF RATIONAL OR LIBERAL MEDICINE TO THE VARIOUS SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE

By bearing in mind what rational or liberal medicine is aiming at in its own development, it is easy to infer what must be its relationship toward the various schools, or systems of medicine, which from time to time spring up. It is itself aiming at freedom from dogmas, for these inevitably lead, as it has too often discovered in its own history, to narrow and one-sided generalization.

It has in all these ages of seeking after truth so often felt the evil of such things that it has learned to beware of them. It therefore says to schools or systems basing themselves upon fixed dogmas:

These things belong to the past: modern science has grown beyond them. Such dogmas imply narrowness. It is a step back toward the dark ages again. Only the broadest freedom of investigation should be recognized in scientific research. Because you have thus abandoned the broader field, and have restricted your research to the narrow limits of a fixed and unchangeable creed, we cannot accord to you full recognition as broad and progressive members of a liberal profession. Science knows no boundary lines of creeds; and in the ranks of scientists the days for shibboleths have gone by. It is *because* you have abandoned the broader field of rational medicine, and *because* you are hydropathic physicians, or eclectic physicians, or homeopathic physicians—men whose science is bound up by a preconceived and inflexible theory, and because you are not simply *physicians*, men free to seek for, and to use, truth wherever found, that you are not accorded recognition as worthy representatives of a liberal and rational medicine. It is because you load yourselves down with clogs in the shape of *pathies*, and tie the load on by a distinctive name. Liberal medicine refuses to so encumber itself with clogs: ties itself to no set theories: binds itself by no name distinctive of a fixed creed: and so has to unload itself of no fixed burden of clogs when it would advance.

To the individual members of these schools Liberal Medicine says: Recognition is not withheld from you because you, as individuals, hold some theories of disease and of treatment which we consider narrow and ill-founded, for many individual men within the ranks of liberal medicine hold opinions probably deemed by their fellows equally odd, and yet are simply looked upon with a lenient smile as men who have some queer fancies; but it is because you elevate the fancy into a dogma, and build thereon a sect, and tie yourselves to it, making it a restrictive creed for education, and a test of standing. It is not because you, as an individual, are considered to hold only

a partial truth, for many within the ranks of regular medicine fail to grasp the breadth of its teachings, and all their days are only as lame men in the pathway, but because you insist that this is all of truth and restrict yourselves to it.

Liberal medicine has tenets and treatments which resemble from one point of view homeopathy, others which resemble hydropathy; but it recognizes the fact that these are only partial and incomplete views, and are not all, but that more lies beyond. It lifts its eyes from the single hills toward the eternal highlands which it knows must tower through the mists above and afar. It may as yet catch only partial glimpses of that higher ground of medical science, but it feels that somewhere, on through the mists, it lies; and will be content with no resting place that is short of that goal. And it may be that the limits placed upon human knowledge by human weakness make the goal an unattainable one. Still it will climb the higher by being content with nothing less.

Another reason why the profession of liberal medicine has declined to accord recognition to these various schools and systems, is the character of the educational work which they permit within their ranks.

The constant struggle of rational medicine is to raise the standard of education. Under this endeavor the standard has been raised, as has already been stated, from the old-time country reading and a certificate, or possibly a single course of lectures, to a three years' graded course, with clinical work in the hospitals, and rigid examinations. And the tendency is toward a still higher standard. It is not unfair to say that this effort to raise the standard of education upon the part of liberal medicine has not been met by a corresponding effort among the schools or systems enumerated. While there have been some honorable exceptions, the general standard has been low, and without a well-expressed desire or intention of a change. It is no unfair or unjust rule which rational medicine applies to these schools, for it applies the same test to itself. The so-called college of rational medicine which does not conform to the requirements of the higher education, or which lowers its grade, at once loses caste, and is refused recognition. And this is the point in which those of the schools in these systems, which attempt the higher education, fail of reaping the just fruits of their more honorable work. For instead of declining to recognize the colleges which cling to the inferior standard of education, they continue to recognize them as legitimate institutions of learning, and admit their defectively educated graduates to an equal standing with their own who have honestly done better work. In this way they practically neutralize the effect of their efforts to elevate the standard of their colleges.

A very proper reply was given a few years ago by the English National Association of Physicians to an application upon the part of a numerous body of one of these schools for recognition by the regular profession. The reply was this:

"Before we were recognized as fitted to become members of the profession we had to go through a thorough course of study, and pass rigid exami-

nations. Give proof that you can stand the same tests and you will receive recognition."

The offer was declined, and of course recognition was withheld.

This rigid stand is taken by the profession of liberal medicine upon the question of education, because it is felt that where human health and human life are at stake only the most thorough possible preparation for the work should be tolerated; for even then the physician will too often be made to feel how limited are his powers of relief, and how much yet remains to be learned.

THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE

Medicine is not yet an exact science. Possibly it may never be, for of all branches of human knowledge it probably is hedged about by the greatest difficulties. Yet it stands today far in advance of its position a century ago; and a century ago it stood in advance of its position of a century before. Age by age it is climbing higher. Age by age it is penetrating deeper and deeper into the mysteries of disease, of its causation, of its cure. And no one realizes with more sadness than does the educated physician the vastness of the field which is still a terra incognita; and no one who has not stood with him in the midst of the perplexities and anxieties of his toiling, can realize the keenness with which he feels the slurs so often wantonly cast upon his work by tongue and by press. It is a cruel wound to give to what is probably today the most conscientiously self-sacrificing of all the callings of man. The cruelty of the wounding can only be excused by its thoughtlessness. I, who, after years of toil in this work, am no longer seeking its rewards, may say these things as one might not who may be but just entering upon its labors. I plead for the incoming generation of toilers in this sacred field, a juster appreciation upon the part of that public to whom the toil is given. And I plead a juster discrimination in judging of men. To the public any man who puts up his sign and calls himself "Doctor," is a physician. And yet many of these are men without even the pretense of medical education. And for their misdeeds, for their ignorance, the profession must share the obloquy and the shame, for the public does not stop to discriminate. And yet it is not the fault of the legitimate profession of medicine that such is the case. Scarcely a session of a legislature goes by in any state that the request does not come up from the organized profession for laws to weed out the unworthy; for laws establishing tests of examination as to knowledge and scientific attainments, before men shall be permitted to take into their hands the care of human life.

"We," they say, "who daily are called upon to witness the harm done by men who have in no way qualified themselves to battle with disease, and yet who, with mercenary motives, enter upon the work, we ask you to establish tests; require examinations; make men first prove their fitness, as you do with engineers upon your steamboats, or with lawyers at your bar. We ask no favor. We do not ask exemption from the working of the law for ourselves or for our colleges. Require the test

of all; and then debar the ignorant, the unworthy, from entering upon this work."

This is what the profession asks. It is the public which through its representatives refuses; and, where laws are passed, through its juries, refuses to enforce. Ought it not then, in justice, to withhold its censure?

BUT THE FUTURE? WHAT OF THAT?

This I have to say, that while man dwells upon the earth there will be pain, and disease, and death. It is the order of nature. Yet we are learning all the while more effective means of easing and controlling pain; we are discovering, year by year, more effective methods of preventing disease, and of battling with it when it has come; we are devising better ways of warding off epidemics; we are, with the more careful elaboration of sanitary measures, steadily lowering the average per cent of disease in population, and adding to the average length of human life. It is not all; yet it is something. Indeed, when we read the records of disease and suffering, and the death rate, of even a century or two ago, it seems much, this that has been accomplished.

AND THE QUESTION OF SCHOOLS? OF DOGMAS? OF THEORIES?—WHAT OF THESE?

Time will settle these: time, and more knowledge. As I have already said, one of the merits of rational medicine of today is, that it has learned to beware of positive dogmas and theories, and the schools which are based exclusively upon them. It has found that they are short-lived, and die out; for they are based not upon science, but upon one view of science. Then, if that view proves to be narrow, or mistaken, or false, there is nothing left, and of course they die. It has felt in its own history the evil of these things, and how they may become a clog and a bar to progress. It has learned that even today, with all the great advance which has been made in the accumulation and classification of facts, the stock is not yet sufficient for final generalization; and so has learned to work and to wait. In so varied a field, with a causation so varied, will a single general theory of disease, its causation and its management, ever be possible? It may be doubted. It certainly is not as yet. And so rational medicine, grown wiser than of old, aims to waste no time, no labor, upon problems which are as yet of necessity unsolvable. Instead, its aim now is to delve yet more deeply into the facts, and to push ever higher the standard of medical education. It feels that by this road, and by this road only, is the way to the higher truth.

And to the various schools of medical practice, schools basing themselves upon rigid dogmas and theories, it has only this to say:

"We cannot feel that you are doing the most worthy work. We cannot feel that you are best furthering the advancement of human knowledge. We can only feel that, whether you perceive it or not, you are dropping out of the current of progress; that by your premature generalization, and your rigid dogmas, you are tying your own hands in the battle. It is with no feeling of unkindness

we look upon you; yet, standing as you do upon your narrower basis, we cannot recognize you as most worthy members of a liberal science.

"Only, we plead with you to weed out the low-grade institutions of learning in your ranks. Raise, as we are doing, the standard of education, and keep advancing it ever higher. If you are honest in your belief, and we do not propose to question this, you need not fear the light, and increased knowledge. Let these be the test: the dross will disappear, and whatever of good there may be will remain."

And the time will come, in that newer day, upon that higher plane of science, when schools will drop away; and no one shall say "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," but the science of medicine shall be one: the doctor shall become doctissimus, and he shall be only a *physician*, a healer of men.

Los Angeles, April, 1888.

CONVERSATIONAL GEMS OF DR. J. P. WIDNEY*

*Founder of the Los Angeles County Medical Association:
At Age of Ninety-Five Still Active in Literary
and Church Work*

Life is a ladder. We begin at the bottom.

Many a good carpenter has been spoiled by an ambition to become an architect.

The world is constantly looking for people that can be depended upon. Hettie adds: "which causes eyestrain."

A perfect civilization will become a possibility when a perfect man has been developed.

Uneatable weeds are Nature's provision for fertilizing waste lands.

The book that will live is the book that has been lived.

Some people never grow old, and some are born old.

Civilization advances by its breakdowns.

Of all the sources of information in human history, tradition is the most imperishable.

No amount of cultivation can make genius out of a commonplace mind.

It is easier to fight an army of elephants than an army of ants.

A new word does not necessarily mean a new idea.

Reform becomes a form of hysteria. Reformers shout themselves hoarse trying to keep others quiet.

Have your wealth in yourself and not in your pocket.

No amount of cultivation will make a radish out of a turnip.

A hypocrite is a man who prays and preys.

If you would be happy, carry someone who has no legs.

The social turmoil of the world today is not a fight against capital—it is a fight against brains.

It's the continuous rain in Southern California that counts.

Birthdays, like wine, improve with age.

Education may cultivate brains—it cannot make them.

If you would be loved make yourself lovable.

There are times when words become crime.

Scholarship does not necessarily mean culture.

Culture is the ripening and mellowing of scholarship.

Pasadena Avenue is the fading remnant of a dream.

There are many good things and many good people that do not mix well.

A lump of ice will never fry a beefsteak.

The type of architecture of every country has grown out of the climatic needs of that country.

Tomorrow never comes. It is always today. Eternity is one eternal Now.

Many singers think they are singing with expression, when they are only making faces.

The way to keep your credit good is not to use it.

We cannot dress according to the calendar.

Willing shoulders always find their burden.

The surest way to get up in the world is to push other people up.

(To Be Continued)

* Compiled by Rebecca Davis Macartney.

CLINICAL NOTES AND CASE REPORTS

MULTIPLE CYSTS OF BOTH LUNGS

By F. F. GUNDRUM, M.D.

AND

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MULTIPLE thin-walled ("soap bubble") cysts of the lungs are not as rare as formerly supposed. They are, however, sufficiently uncommon that it may be worth while to present one more example of this disease.

REPORT OF CASE

H. R. Male. Single. Age 20.

Family History.—Three brothers and three sisters, all living and well. One brother died of "heart disease," as did also his father. Mother living and well.

Personal History.—Very free from all contagious maladies. He had smallpox and occasional tonsillitis.

Condition began gradually two years ago, when the patient noticed shortness of breath upon exertion, which became slowly more troublesome. He is perfectly comfortable when at rest, either sitting or lying. He coughs up a small amount (two teaspoonfuls) of "grayish yellow" sputum each morning, never bloody. All other bodily functions are normal.

The patient is well nourished, healthy-appearing young man; good color, no dyspnea; height, 71 inches; weight, 122 pounds; temperature, 99.6 at 4 p. m.; stasis good.

Head: Scalp clear; hearing good; eyes clear; pupils active; nasal passages clear; frontal sinuses and antra transilluminate well; teeth good; tonsils hypertrophic and very red (probably accounting for the slight fever).

Neck: No enlarged glands; thyroid negative.

Thorax: Well formed, well developed; vocal fremitus diminished over both lowers behind, right more than left; circumference at nipples (at rest 36, expiration 35½, inspiration 37); percussion note somewhat hyperresonant

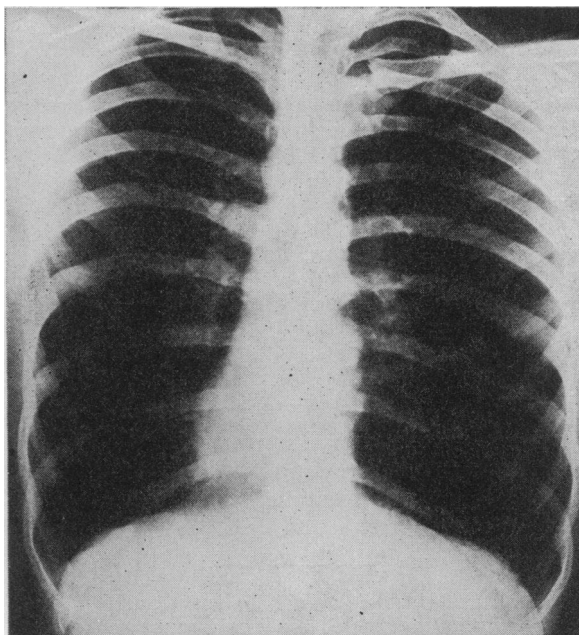


Fig. 1.—P-A view.